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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2018  
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [SL](#)  
SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE COCAINE TRIAL UPDATE: FOUR SUSPECTS  
GRANTED BAIL

REF: FREETOWN 336

Classified By: Charge Glenn Fedzer for reasons 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Summary: Four minor suspects have been granted bail in Sierra Leone's ongoing narcotics case (reftel), and may have their charges dropped. Key figures remain in jail, however, but the pace of the trials is slow. The drugs seized in the case have not yet been destroyed, and general consensus blames the Attorney General for the lack of progress.

2.(C) The Sierra Leone cocaine trials are dragging out, with no clear resolution in sight. The 19 initial cases began simultaneously, but are now (slowly) developing at their own pace. The ongoing delays have fueled accusations of mismanagement and/or political interference against Attorney General and Minister of Justice Abdul Serry-Kamal. It appears that he alternately blocked or delayed progress, either deliberately when in country or passively when, prior to his departure, he reportedly instructed subordinates not to anything during his absence through much of September from Sierra Leone. Case evidence is gradually being presented in the Magistrate Court for the preliminary hearings, but few witnesses have given testimony and nothing of substance has been entered as of yet.

¶3. (C) Over the last few weeks, defense attorneys have pushed for bail, and on October 3rd, Fatmata Bangura and Bankole Kamara Deen were granted bail. Alusine Kamara and Obai Kamara followed on October 8th. All four, arrested for allegedly aiding in the escape of Gibril Kamara (reftel) by ferrying him to Conakry, have been charged with 'intent to defeat the course of public justice' as conspirators, but are not viewed as central figures in the narcotics smuggling.

¶4. (C) Although their lawyers had in some cases been pleading for bail due to medical conditions, in the end the four were all granted bail based on eligibility on routine legal grounds. Embassy contacts have reported speculation that the prosecution's recent relaxed stance on bail is an indication that the cases on these four accused may soon be dropped. Many sense that the prosecution lacks either sufficient evidence or political will to convict the accused in these specific cases.

¶5. (C) Applications for bail of the other 15 accused are ongoing. Magistrate Deen Tarawalie said all bail applications will have to be taken up with the High Court. Embassy contacts within the defense team reported that High Court officials and members of the prosecution team have given 'off the record' indications that they may eventually allow bail for the majority of the accused, but this remains to be seen.

¶6. (C) Local consensus blames the Attorney General for the lack of progress. He indicated to Embassy officers in late

August that the trials, for crimes of a relatively straightforward nature, could be completed in several weeks; he is now well past that target with no signs the trials will end soon. None of the accused have been charged with drug offenses, as no such crimes were on the books at the time of the seizure. One key action supposedly on hold during the AG's extended absence, the destruction of the drugs, has yet to take place, with no explanation forthcoming. The EU sent a diplomatic note asking for the status of the destruction order on the 14th of October, and is awaiting a response; the drugs are currently in the custody of British military personnel in Sierra Leone as part of an international military assistance program.

17. (C) Comment: Granting bail to the still-incarcerated foreigners would amount to an acquittal, as once freed most believe they would quickly, albeit illegally, flee the country. It would also be a political disaster for President Koroma, eliminating his current image as being above the corruption. One presidential advisor conveyed to the Embassy October 15 that many close to the president, and within the Sierra Leone security services, are very disappointed with the AG's performance (or lack thereof) and now believe that he is part of the narcotics trafficking problem rather than part of the solution. It is not clear, however, if the President himself has lost confidence in Mr. Serry-Kamal.  
FEDZER